

A Behavior Makeover for Back Talk

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Kid back talk and sass are on the rise. Luckily, it's one of the easiest behaviors to get rid of if you have a solid makeover plan and consistently use it. Here is a customized plan to stop back talk.

Step 1. Call Out Any Back Talk on the Spot

Any time your kid uses back talk, name it on the spot. He is then clear on what you expect. "That's back talk. I don't listen to that talk." Make sure he knows what he did wrong and how to make it right.

Step 2. Refuse to Engage when your Kid Talks Back

Kids are much more likely to stop talking back if they see it's ineffective in getting our attention. So refuse to continue the conversation until your child stops talking back-and be sure to do it every time. Usually when kids see you are not going to give in, they will stop.

Step 3. If Back Talk Continues, set a Consequence

Suppose that you've been clear with your expectations, yet the back talk continues. It's time to set a consequence. It must be clear to the child, have a specific duration, relate directly to the back talk, and fit the kid. Once set, consistently enforce it and don't back down! One more thought: do consider letting your child participate in creating her own consequences - they often are much harsher than ones you' set.

Step 4. Encourage Respectful Behavior

One of the simplest ways to increase the frequency of any behavior is to reinforce it when we see our child doing it right. The majority of the time we point out when they are acting incorrectly. So any time you see or hear your kids acting respectfully, express your pleasure and acknowledge his progress.

A Parents' Makeover to Stopping Back Talk

Back talk is learned—and kids will keep using it when they know it works. So never give in to kids' disrespectful behavior. Instead, use these steps to stop back talk, and then be relentless until it does stop. Commit immediately to stopping this behavior. Write a letter to yourself stating your commitment and read it often.

Identify how you typically respond to your kid's back talk. Ask yourself why it isn't working. Reread the four steps to squelching talking back. If possible, discuss them with your spouse or another parent. Now develop a plan to end it. Pass on your plan so everyone is on board together.

Recognize that in most cases, step one and two are mandatory for behavior makeovers. If step one and two successfully eliminate your kid's back talk, then skip to step four. If not, try step three and set consequences that are appropriate for your child. Then apply it each time your kid back talks.

Keep up with your plan until you see change—and that's usually three weeks. Track the behavior on a calendar to see if your plan is working and the back talk subsides. Be consistent and do not give in.